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ABSTRACT

The Oregon Network, a research and service activity of the Sex Equity in Educational Leadership Project, was created in 1977 to perform four functions: 1) to document job vacancies and the processes of administrative hiring in Oregon; 2) to help school districts find qualified female applicants; 3) to affect hiring practices that stand as barriers to women; and 4) to establish procedures for institutionalizing improved hiring practices. Integrating information from such sources as school districts, university placement offices, and job applicants, the network created two directories--one of vacant positions and one of available applicants (including males), both favorably received. An analysis of the relationships between the applicant pool, the vacancies, and the applicants eventually hired indicates that women have a better chance of being hired than men. In general, higher proportions of female applicants were hired at the elementary level than at secondary levels, more were hired in staff than in line positions, and more were hired in subordinate than in unit head positions. Based on preliminary data, these findings may be skewed by several variables, including the tendency of men to send out more applications than women and the relatively low number of female applicants generally. (Author/PGD)

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THE OREGON NETWORK
A Research and Service Activity of the Sex Equity in Educational Leadership Project

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THE OREGON NETWORK

The absence of women as administrators in our nation's public schools has been sufficiently described and documented (Schmuck, 1975; Stockard, 1979). Strategies to remedy that situation, however, are not so plentiful. Furthermore, there is little information about how the current market conditions of declining enrollments or gloomy economic forecasts will affect women's opportunities in educational management. This paper addresses these questions by describing the procedures and results of the Oregon Network, a research and service activity of the Sex Equity in Educational Leadership Project (SEEL). The SEEL Project was funded to test various strategies for increasing the numbers of women administrators in Oregon from 1976 to 1979.

Since women comprised over half of the certified educators and were primarily represented as elementary classroom teachers, librarians or in special education, yet represented less than 8% of line administrators, our strategies were aimed at remediating the sex segregation in the field rather than the recruitment of additional females in education. We believed women's absence in administration was due to a variety of psychological and sociological forces and our multilevel change strategy was aimed at individuals and organizations, and policies and practices that deter women's entrance and advancement in the field. The Oregon Network was aimed at the nexus of the problem--school district hiring.

The Network's purposes were fourfold: (a) to document job vacancies and the processes of administrative hiring, (b) to help school districts find qualified female applicants, (c) to affect hiring practices which stand as barriers to women, and (d) to establish procedures for hiring practices to become institutionalized upon the termination of SEEL. The dual focus of the Network was research and service.

The research was to generate new information about administrative hiring. There were several unanswered questions. How many and what kinds of administrative vacancies occurred yearly in Oregon? Who comprised the applicant pool? Who made hiring decisions? What were the criteria for hiring? All administrative changes in Oregon's K-12 public schools during 1977-78 were documented including information on all the above questions. Nearly 3,000 applications and 315 openings were reviewed. Fifteen percent of the applications were from women and 85% from men, and approximately 80% of persons hired were male.

The service feature of the Oregon Network included a clearinghouse of information about aspirants and vacancies. Six issues of the Directory of Administrative Candidates listing 192 administrative aspirants (81 or 42% males, and 111 or 58% females) were distributed to districts with administrative vacancies. The Administrative Vacancy Listing of 202 positions were sent to aspirants in the directory.

In this paper we will describe the formation and operation of the Oregon Network, and results and conclusions.

Formation and Operation

The ON was first conceived as a modest and informal undertaking to be run by a project assistant coordinating aspirants, volunteers and others to provide information and support to each other. Yet several events in 1977 helped change our modest image of the functions of a network.

First, while SEEL strategies were effectively reaching female teachers, there had been little success in reaching the "gatekeepers" to administration,

many of whom held negative stereotypes about women's capability and who also held strategic policy making positions in administrative organizations or school districts.

Second, we knew the need was there. We were often asked for assistance and could only refer to university placement agencies or the state administrators' associations for information about job openings. And we knew these sources were inadequate. We were aware of national efforts to link women and jobs but we knew these attempts had not been highly successful. Discussions with aspirants in Oregon and our experiences at national conferences convinced us that what we envisioned was a vital necessity in our state.

Finally, and perhaps the most important event to shape the model, was our reading of Doris Timpano and Louise Knight's NIE publication, "Sex Discrimination in the Selection of School District Administrators: What Can Be Done?" The efforts of Career Women in Education were described and helped form the seed of the Oregon Network.

It became clear SEEL needed to become more aggressive in getting and disseminating information; we needed to focus on organizational policies and procedures rather than attempting to confront negative stereotypes on an individual basis. Yet there were also many questions that had to be answered before an effective strategy could be shaped. For instance, a survey of a large school district in 1975 showed that women comprised only 4% of the applicant pool for principals. If that were true, how could women complain about discriminatory practices if there were so few to choose from? Some data indicated that women had more classroom experience than men before they became administrators. Are different criteria applied to female and male candidates? It

appeared that screening and interviewing committees were predominantly male. Did that fact make a difference in hiring administrators? Only by conducting a major research effort could we answer these and other questions. Only by having these answers could we devise strategies that were effective and efficient in terms of limited resources. Thus it was conceived as a dual purpose--to generate information (the research function) and to generate change (the service function).

Gaining Entry to School Districts

All research and change projects face the problem of "entry." We were no exception. How could we enlist the cooperation of all Oregon districts to give information about their hiring practices. We had no legitimate power to do so, we had no compliance or monitoring functions and could not rightfully demand the information. Furthermore, our credibility was suspect. We were seen as "uppity women" trying to make waves in placid ponds, as "university types" lacking understanding and appreciation of the real day-to-day problems of school administrators, and we were associated with all the suspicions that inevitably accompany grants from the federal government.

Through a series of meetings with various state agencies and institutions, we finally received an official endorsement by the state administrators' group (The Confederation of Oregon School Administrators). We believe this was extremely important and accounts for the almost total cooperation of Oregon school districts. As a point of interest, field coordinators reported cordial and helpful contacts with districts although they were well-prepared for resistance and lack of cooperation. Only two small districts

refused to cooperate. Although several administrators expressed dismay over the time demands we placed on them, voiced initial suspicion of our project, or were guarded in the information they would impart, many others welcomed the opportunity to discuss equity issues, seemed to enjoy talking with the researchers, and cooperated fully. It is our impression that the administrators' leadership is generally more conservative than its constituency, responding more to the resistant vocal minority than to the supportive majority.

Operations

Spencer Wyant became the Oregon Network Coordinator and six field coordinators were hired. Each coordinator was assigned to a different region of Oregon.

Region I, centered in Portland but also including the suburbs and two rural counties, included 50 districts with more than 500 administrators and over 160,000 students. Region II, in the north central part of the state, included both mountains and deserts. Its 39 districts had 163 administrators and nearly 38,000 students. Region III covered the entire eastern third of the state, and had mostly small districts with 164 administrators and 29,000 students. Region IV, in the southwest, ranged from the central desert to the coast, having 47 districts, 346 administrators and 71,000 students. Region V included Eugene-Springfield, the lower Willamette Valley and the central coast. It had 57 districts with 309 administrators and 80,000 students. Region VI was an L-shaped piece covering the central Willamette Valley and

northern coast. Its 61 districts had 250 administrators and 59,000 students. In all, our coordinators were responsible for contacting 302 districts (we eliminated from study those districts with less than 50 students) having 1,740 administrative positions.

The coordinators' task was three-fold. First, they were to contact--in person or by phone--the administrator in charge of hiring in each district within their region. This first contact was primarily to introduce themselves and the project to the administrators after a mailing had been sent. Armed with printed information about the Network, the six coordinators began the trek that would eventually log more than 20,000 miles of travel to their districts. Coordinators asked that the districts notify them of vacancies as they occurred, and described the nature and purposes of our research.

Second, followup visits were made to districts with vacancies. Coordinators documented each position opening. We are confident our vacancy documentation was complete. The coordinators maintained telephone communication periodically with each district to learn of vacancies, and information was cross checked with data from other sources. We received the vacancy notice listings from individual districts in many cases, as well as those of the state administrators' association and two of the state's three univeristy placement services. In all, there was a lively exchange of communication as we notified coordinators of openings of which we were aware and they us. No single source of information proved entirely complete, but by using a variety of sources we managed to cover the field pretty well.

Finally, when an administrative position was filled, the coordinator returned to the district to document the procedures and processes.

The Service Function

Another activity of the Network was the clearinghouse service function to provide information about vacancies and candidates. Our intention was to provide districts and aspirants with information previously unavailable so that aspirants would have greater access to information about openings than was available through existing channels, and districts would have readily available information about the pool of interested and qualified female aspirants.

The clearinghouse, while useful in itself, was designed as an adjunct to our research aims. We hoped to gather information about the nature of the applicant pool. We hoped for information about hiring processes that would supplement that gained by the field coordinators. The activity would give us data about the usefulness of the clearinghouse as a strategy for overcoming barriers to sex inequity. Finally, it would be a first step toward raising the state capacity for reform by institutionalizing the clearinghouse in an existing state agency, operating without federal funds.

The results can be described as both impressive and mixed. There is evidence that the directory and vacancy listings were used by districts and aspirants. The continuing publication of the directory of candidates will be taken over by a newly formed organization, Oregon Women in Educational Administration (formed by SEEL). The vacancy listings are not being published this year and individuals must rely on the traditional sources for job information.

The Directory of Administrative Candidates was begun by widely distributing a form for soliciting persons wishing to be listed. The information

included the applicant's name, sex, race, address and telephone, degrees and certificates held, areas of special interest and types of positions sought, as well as some research-only information such as age, marital status, current position and prior experience, willingness to relocate, and willingness to consider either permanent part-time or job-sharing positions. In our mailings and publicity, we made it clear that we did not screen or rate candidates and that our publication did not endorse any individual.

It was our decision to include men in the directory. While we believe that was the right decision, we were worried that our efforts to assist women might inadvertantly benefit the members of the "old boy's network" more than aspiring females. We believed, however that a list restricted only to women (the state of Washington has such a list) would not be used as much nor gain the necessary credibility as a list which included men. Of the 192 persons listed, 111 (58%) were female and 81 (42%) were male.

Vacancy listings were sent to persons in the directory and to other agencies whom we wished to keep informed. In a number of cases we learned of vacancies with application deadlines that came before the next scheduled publication. In such a case, we sent a selective mailing about that particular vacancy to those persons in the directory who had expressed an interest in that kind of position. The Directory of Candidates was distributed to districts with known, advertised openings by the field coordinators. Our intent was to strengthen the role of the coordinators by providing a personal link between the project and the districts. We also distributed the directories to other agencies and colleagues we wished to keep informed.

Results

The six Oregon Network field coordinators documented 315 administrative openings in Oregon during 1978-79. Openings included those vacancies advertised as well as those which occurred through appointment, transfer, or promotion. Presently, the results are still being compiled. Thus, the figures presented here are preliminary and tentative.

First, data is presented on numbers and proportions of women and men hired for administrative positions. Even this relatively simple matter, however, has its ambiguities. This situation results from the fact that there is no clear and simple decision-rule to separate administrators from non-administrators or to distinguish kinds of administrators. The same titles may have different duties in different districts: "director" in one case may have the same duties as a "coordinator" in another case. That is, "line" and "staff" are conceptually easy, but in practice the distinction is much harder to make. In general, we have erred on the side of inclusion, including quasi-administrative positions which include some aspects of administrative duties such as program planning and supervision, budget control, and supervision of other adults.

The table below describes the administrative openings and those persons hired for positions in Oregon in 1977-78 (the number presented is less than the total job openings because some positions were not filled by the time our study ended and because we are verifying some of our data, so these positions are not included).

While the data in Table 1 represent an improvement in the numbers and proportions of women in educational administration over previous years, it can

Table 1: Hirees in Oregon 1977-78 by Position

Position	Total	Male	Female	Per cent Female
High School Principal	32	30	2	6.3
Junior High/Mid School Principal	15	13	2	13.3
Elementary Principal	62	52	10	16.1
High School Asst. Principal	45	38	7	15.6
Junior High Asst. Principal	16	10	6	37.5
Elementary Asst. Principal	14	8	6	49.9
Superintendent	28	26	2	7.1
Central Office--line	23	18	5	21.7
Central Office--staff	50	32	18	36.0
TOTALS	285	227	58	20.3

be seen that the traditional patterns of employment did not change in the year of our study. There are higher proportions of women at elementary than secondary levels, and substantially more women hired in staff than in line positions. The rearrangement of these figures in Table 2 shows some of these comparisons more clearly.

Table 2: Hirees in Oregon 1977-78 by Category

Category	Total	Male	Female	Per Cent Female
Line	235	195	40	17.0
Staff	50	32	18	36.0
Central Office	101	76	25	24.8
Building	184	151	33	17.9
Elementary	76	60	16	21.1
Secondary	108	91	17	15.7
Head of unit (supt., principal)	137	121	16	11.7
Subordinate	148	106	42	28.4
Principal	109	95	14	12.8
Assistant principal	75	56	19	25.3
TOTALS	285	227	58	20.4

Obviously, all the lines in Table 2 are not independent; for example, "head of unit" overlaps with "principal" and "superintendent," and so on.

Trends as shown in Table 2 are clear. Women were hired as staff administrators twice as often as they were for line positions. They were more likely to be hired in elementary than in secondary level positions, and they were almost 2.5 times more likely to be subordinates than heads of buildings or districts. The proportion of women hired as assistant principals was twice that of principals.

Some data allow us to make at least short-term comparisons of trends in hiring. Using data from the state department of education, we can compare the proportions of women in various positions in previous years with hirings during 1977-78. Table 3 presents these trends. It should be read with some caution, however, since there are ambiguities in the classification of various positions. Districts changed their classifications during the time covered, and it may be that our categories and those of previous years are not strictly comparable.

Table 3: Trends in Administrative Hiring (% Female)

Position	1972-73	1976-77	1977-78
Superintendent	.8	.8	7.1
Principal	5.7	7.5	12.8
Assistant Principal	6.2	13.3	25.3
Central Office--line	24.6	21.0	21.7
Central Office--staff	29.0	32.2	36.0

There are two ways to view the data presented in Table 3. One is to note the overall upward trend in the proportion of women and thus feel optimistic.

The other is to note that the sheer numbers and proportions of women is very low, so that, if the present trend continued at its present pace, it will be a long, long time before equity is achieved. While the figure for the increase in superintendents is dramatic, it should be remembered that the figure for each of the three years represents only two women. The total proportion of women superintendents in Oregon this year is not 7.1%; it is much closer to the figure of previous years. While the proportions of women are generally up (with the exception of central office line administrators), the long-term implications are unclear. It may be that the large increase in female assistant principals will signal a large increase in the number of female principals in years to come; alternatively, it may signal that this is a terminal position for the aspirations of many women. Lacking longitudinal data for the 1977-87 decade, we cannot now say.

The distribution of openings, with two exceptions, generally follows that of the population. That is, jobs are where the people are. Further, the proportion of women hired in various sections of the state are very roughly congruent with public opinion towards female administrators, but the correlation is not exact.

For this analysis, the state is divided into six regions, corresponding to the areas assigned to the field coordinators. The population--and the more liberal political sentiment--is concentrated in the major metropolitan areas of the Willamette Valley in the northwest part of the state. The central, eastern, and southern parts of Oregon are thinly populated and are usually more conservative in sentiment.

In 1977, SESL commissioned the public opinion polling firm of Bardsley and Haslacher to survey attitudes toward female elementary principals, secondary principals, and superintendents. The most favorable attitudes were found in the Willamette Valley areas which have relatively large metropolitan areas, while less favorable attitudes were found in the sparsely-populated central, eastern, and southwestern regions.

While the two Willamette Valley regions which had the most favorable attitudes also had the highest proportions of women hired in administrative positions, and other regions with less favorable attitudes and lower proportions of women hired, the correlation is not exact. In particular, the southwestern region of the state consistently had the least favorable attitudes toward female administrators. Yet, the proportion of women hired in that area--which is generally conservative and considered the "redneck" portion of the state--is the highest of any region outside the valley. It is even higher than the region which includes the state's major metropolitan area. We are puzzled by this finding, and do not yet have a good explanation for it.

Our data on the composition of the applicant pool, and the fortunes of women and men who applied for administrative positions are still sketchy. We can view these results with a guarded optimism, though, since they seem to indicate that women who apply fare rather well in comparison with their counterpart male aspirants.

In summary, our findings seem to indicate that women who apply for administrative positions have a somewhat better chance of getting the jobs than men who apply. While the figures presented below do not include all the positions we surveyed, they are based on a preliminary survey of 119 hirings,

for which there were some 2,440 applications. Of those applications, about 15% were from women. In comparison, 23% of persons interviewed were women, 22% of the finalists were women, and 24% of those hired were women. (This, of course, is a higher proportion than presented in earlier tables. This analysis was done before the entire study was completed, and many of the positions late in the year were filled by men by transfer, appointment, or promotion.)

These figures mean that once women are in the applicant pool they fare better than men. Comparing hirees with applications, about twice as many women as men "survive" to become successful candidates. It appears that 8% of applications from women result in landing the job, while 4% of those from men result in hiring. (Of course, this figure may be an artifact, if it is true that men send out more applications than women. There is some evidence that men are more persistent applicants for jobs, sending out more feelers, than are women. Our figures are based on the number of applications received for jobs rather than actual persons.)

The decisive step seems to be that between application and interview. Nearly 36% of applications received from women result in interviews, while about 21% of those from men lead to interviews. After that, the proportion of women and men who survive the succeeding steps of interview, finalist, and hiree are roughly equal. One possible interpretation may be that women are relatively over-represented as interviewees because districts wish to bolster their figures for affirmative action compliance reviews. We have no way of assessing the accuracy of this hunch.

In short, our data seem to argue for a guarded optimism in viewing trends in administrative hiring in our state: the proportion of women in most

positions seems to be rising, and women seem to fare well in competition with men once they are in the applicant pool. The emphasis, perhaps, should be on "guarded" rather than "optimism." The fact is that the number and proportion of women in educational administration in Oregon remains low; further, women are concentrated in elementary, subordinate, and staff roles, which means that the traditional patterns of hiring do not appear to be changing.

The "ultimate" evaluation of the success of the Oregon Network is in the future: it will be decided by the proportion of women in educational administration and the attainment of equity. Determining that success would require a long-term study that is beyond the scope of the SEEL Project. Nevertheless, the interim evaluation we are able to muster gives us reason for optimism: women are making some progress in attaining administrative positions, however slowly; the services of the Oregon Network were used by districts who hired administrators and by aspirants; and both district personnel and aspirants listed in the directory of administrative candidates generally reported favorable reactions to the Network.

When we surveyed districts which had administrative openings, we found that 29% of them made use of the directory of administrative candidates, 28% found it useful, and 66% thought the directory should be continued. While the first two figures may seem low, we find them encouraging, considering that the directory was an unknown, first year service, and that it did not operate for the full year of the hiring season. Further, personnel in 29% of districts with openings reported receiving inquiries as a result of their position in the Network's vacancy listing. Some 57% of hiring administrators surveyed had positive reactions to the Network while only 15% had negative comments.

When we surveyed aspirants listed in the directory of administrative candidates, we found that 85% were "very" (54%) or "somewhat" (31%) satisfied with the vacancy listing. Fifty-seven percent were "very" (42%) or "somewhat" (15%) satisfied with the directory listing. Of the persons who responded to our questionnaire about the Network's clearinghouse services, 45% applied for jobs in the vacancy listing and 37% reported being contacted by districts due to their directory listing.

The directory is being continued in 1978-79, though the vacancy listing is not. The number of persons listed in the directory appears to be down somewhat this year. We suspect that the vacancy listing was a strong attraction for many persons in the directory, and that incentive is not present this year. Nevertheless, the directory will be continued in future years by the Oregon Women in Educational Administration.

Later analyses of our data will include finer distinctions among variables so that we can identify trends and barriers to achieving sex equity in educational leadership. These analyses will appear in our final report.

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